

TAKE TEN



Shel Silverstein

Pacific Stars and Stripes

1955

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Foreword

The day I met Shel Silverstein he was a mighty sea-sick soldier.

We were on a troopship bound for Yokohama from the U.S. and were assigned to the ship's newspaper. Despite the way he felt, Shel drew the cartoons and had the fatigue-capped passengers laughing to match the roll of the boat. His humor was straight from the stomach.

After arriving in Tokyo he was sent to Pacific Stars and Stripes. Here Shel began to draw and draw furiously. His cartoons started appearing three times weekly and they spoke the universal language of soldierdom—he was an immediate success.

Silverstein had a little "uchi" or Japanese room, a few blocks from the S&S plant and he would sit there in the evening in a loose-hanging yukata and put down on paper every idea that came into his head. Then, as the sullen heat of the Tokyo night eased a bit, he would begin to sketch and draw.

His technique followed a simple pattern. First he thought of an object—say, his first sergeant.

He'd concentrate until he would come up with 20 or 30 gags on the one subject. Out of it came situations peopled by his long-nosed characters, his little men, his giants, the animals and the strange creatures for which he has a special affection.

In a letter to the home office, Bob Brown of the S&S Seoul Bureau wrote:

"He stays up all night chewing pencils, drawing cartoons and writing ideas on little scraps of paper he never finds again. In the first twenty minutes he was here he had our little office more cluttered than the convention hall in his native Chicago."

"But," added Brown, "he knows the people he draws. He's lived through the same experiences and heard the same lines. In Korea, he has spent his time up front in the outposts and the squad tents with the fellows he wanted most to please."

Like Silverstein himself, there is nothing pretentious or stylized about his work. His cartoons identify themselves with a situation but never become a victim of it. Always on the thoroughly bright side, they are the voice of the whole rather than of the individual. Everything he does is alive with his own personality—rugged exterior, gravel voice, his tremendous energy and enthusiasm.

Here then are the simplicities as well as the subtleties—the obvious and the obtuse—the wonderful conglomerate of a man who loves to write, to draw, to create—and best of all—who loves to laugh.

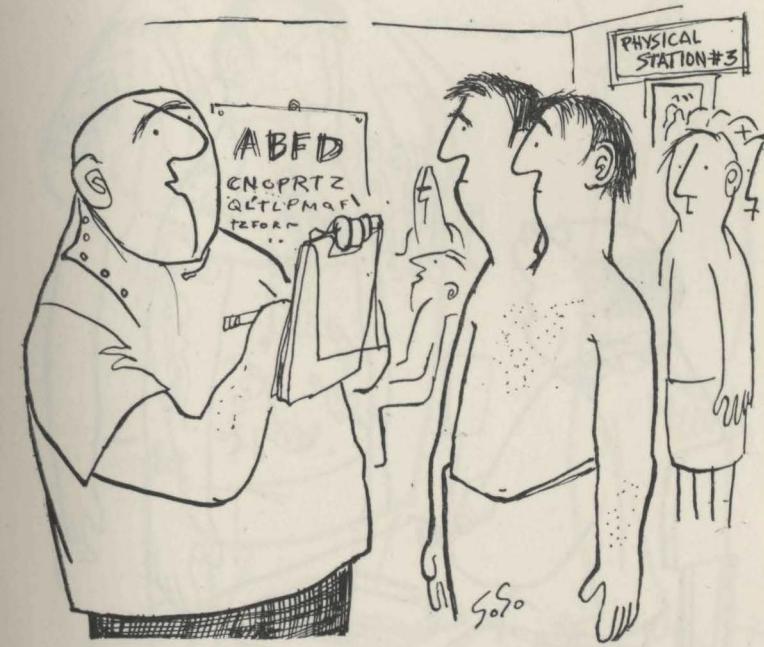
Robert D. Sweeney
Pacific Stars and Stripes
March, 1955

For my grandmother



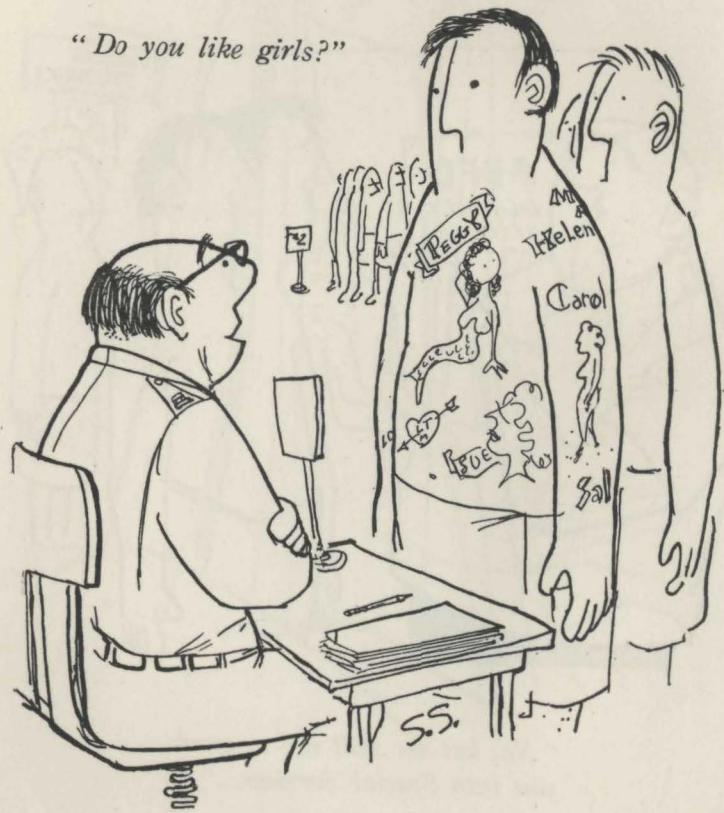
“...and stop saying “I’ve been around!”

"It's from my friends and neighbors..."

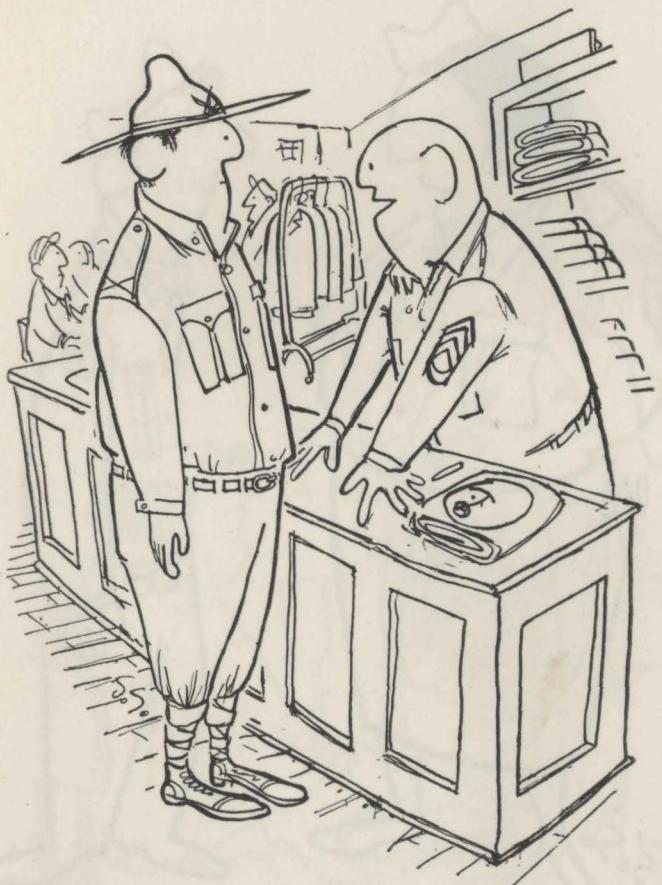


*"No, but we will try to work
you into Special Services..."*

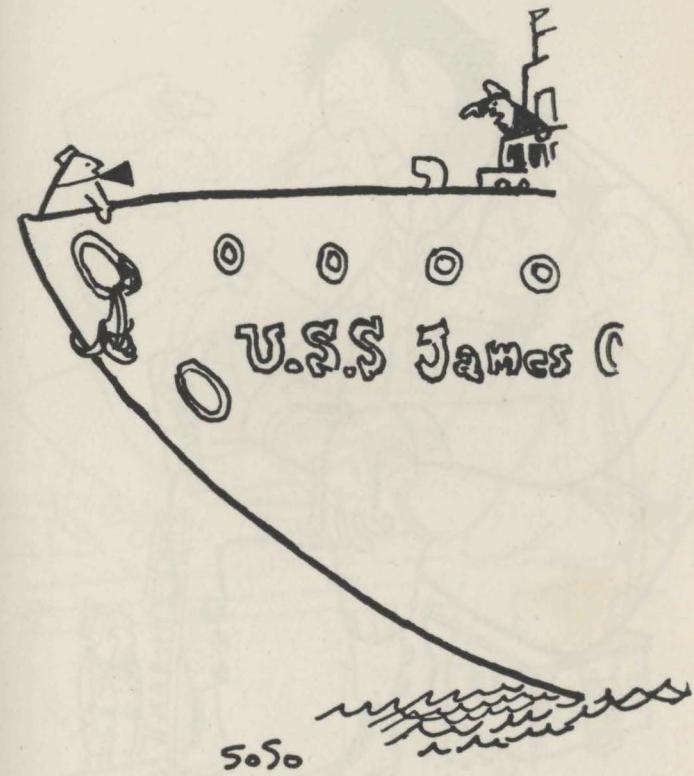
"Do you like girls?"



"And don't 'Sir' me...I'm only a sergeant!"



"EVERYBODY can't have a new uniform..."



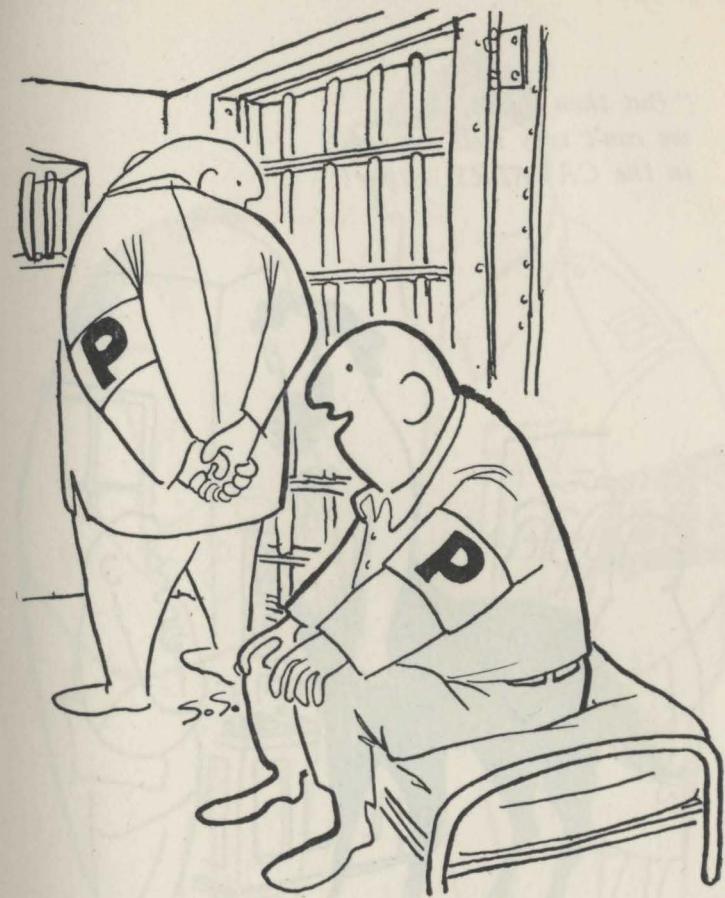
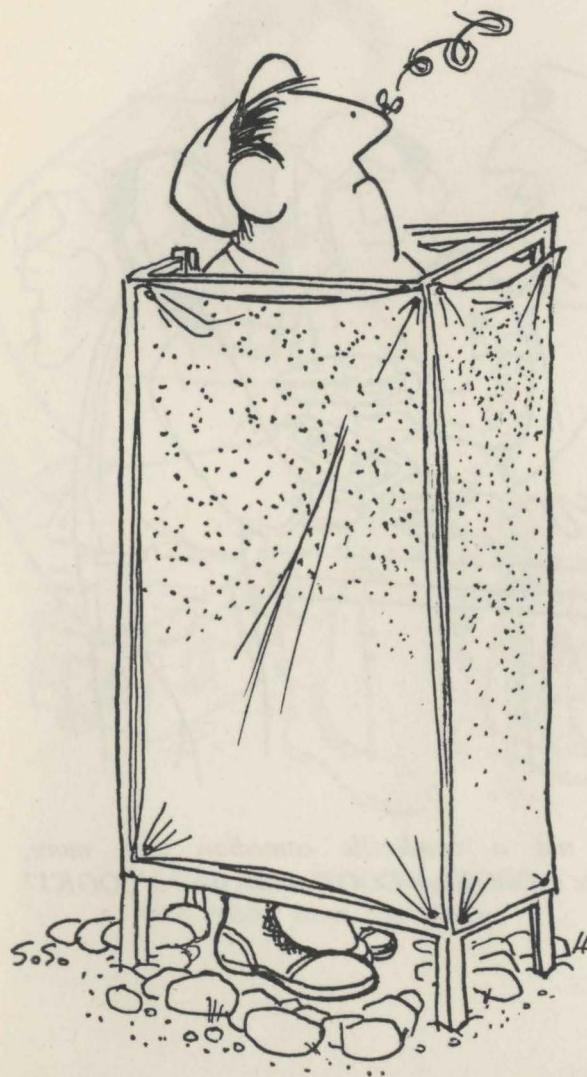
"Get below, Collinsworth... You're not at Princeton, now!"



*"Other guys have thought they
were bigger than the Army."*

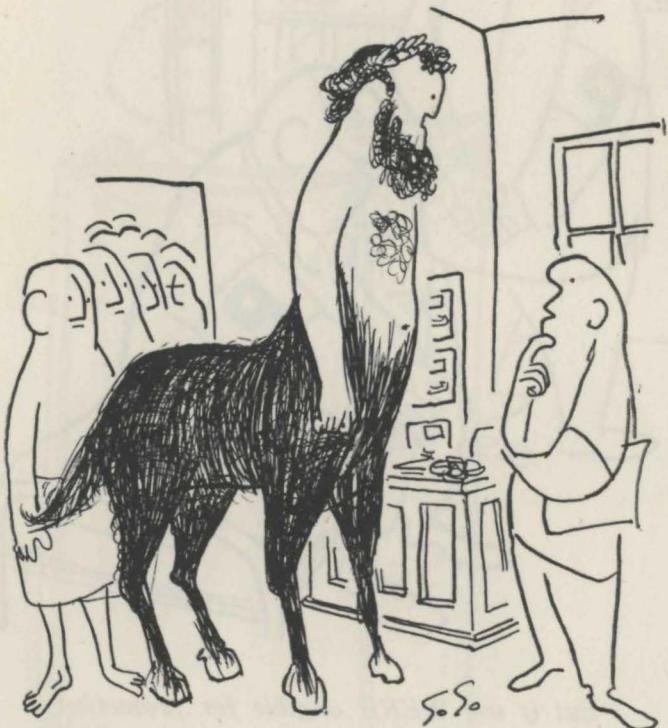


*"Well, you're not a vaudeville comedian any more,
Monahan...you're a COOK...a COOK, hear me...a COOK!"*

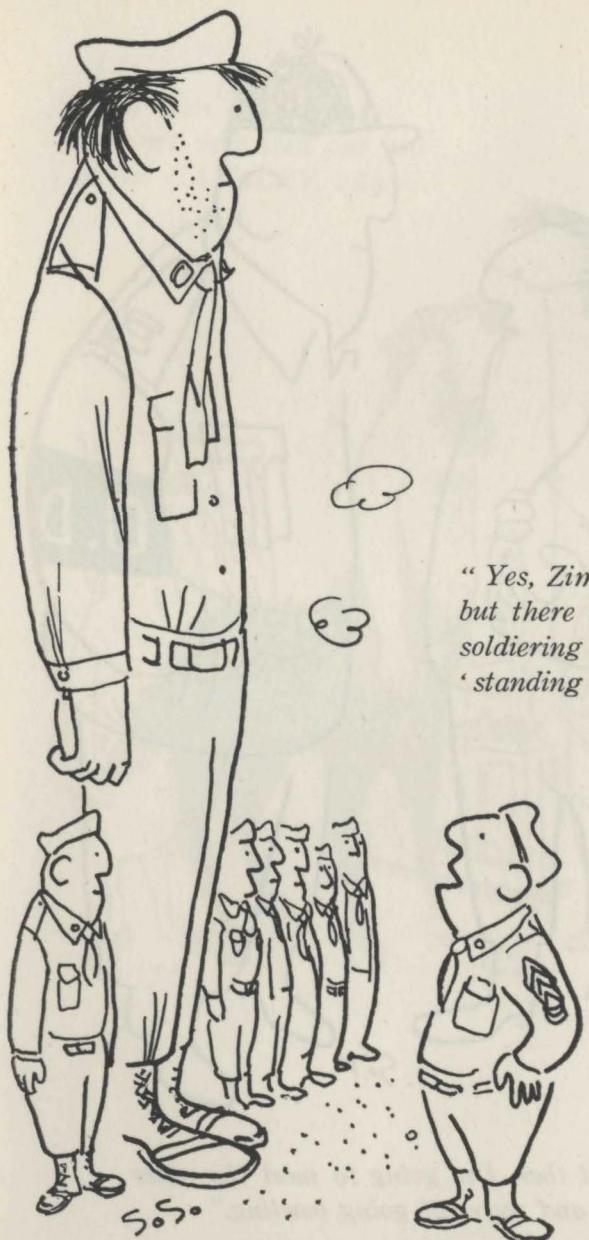


*"But if we WERE eligible for promotion,
think of all the time in grade we'd have..."*

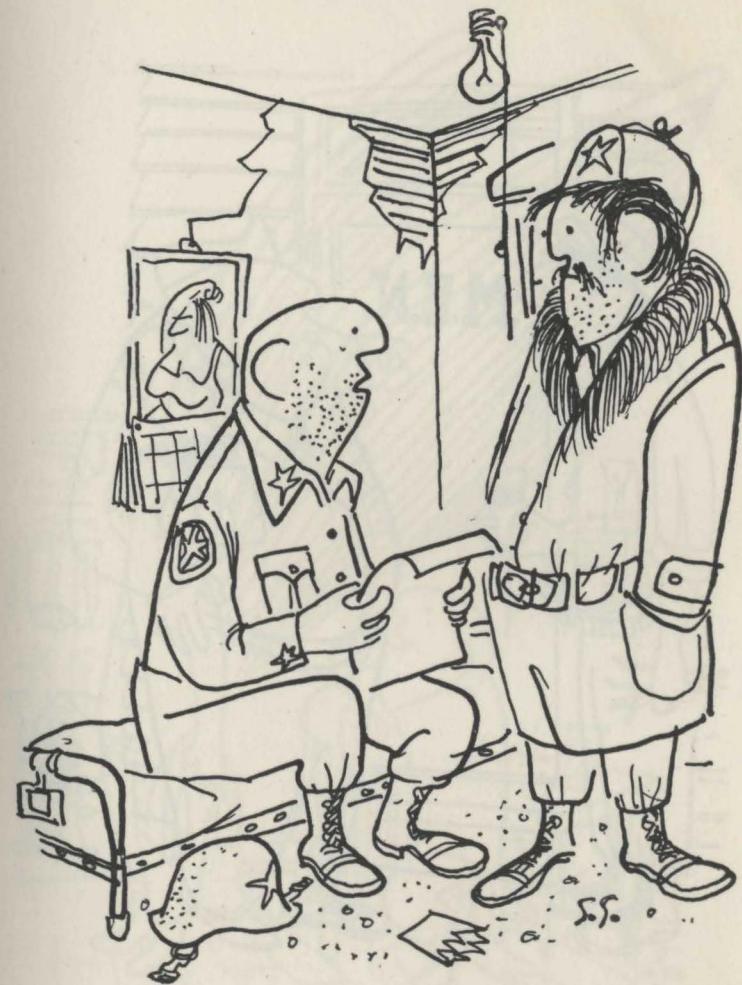
*"But then again,
we can't very well put you
in the CAVALRY, either!"*



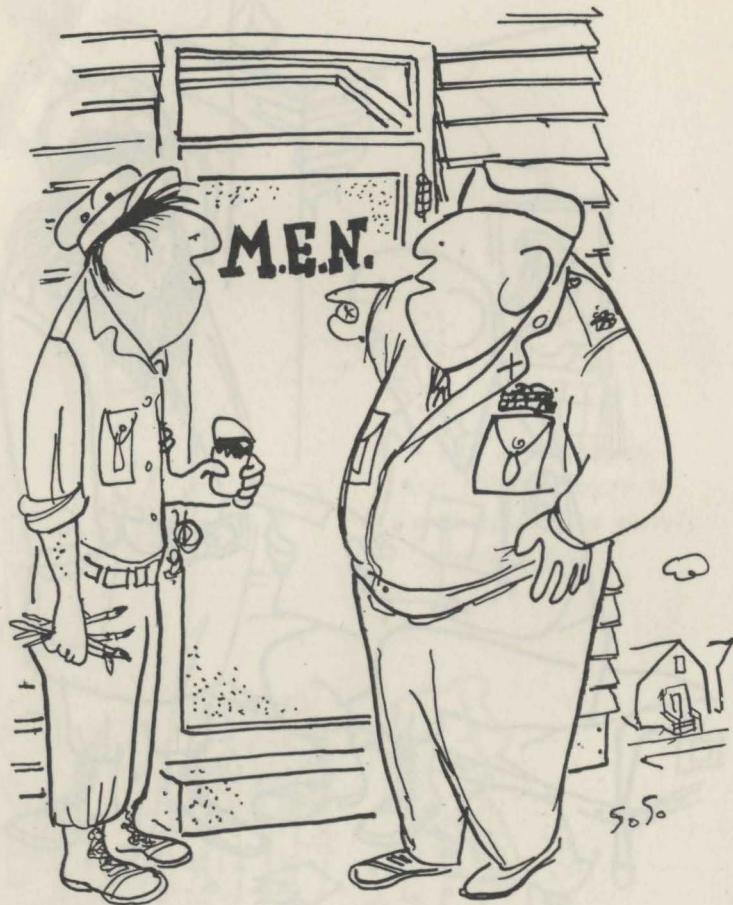
*"And then I'm going to meet the other
guys and we're all going bowling."*



*"Yes, Zimmerman,
but there is more to
soldiering than merely
'standing tall'."*



"I just got a 'Dear Ivan'!"



*"All right, wise guy, let's get it
ALL on...Major Ernest Newton!"*



*"A bit late to think of the Air Force now, Callahan
...You're infantry and you'll STAY infantry!"*

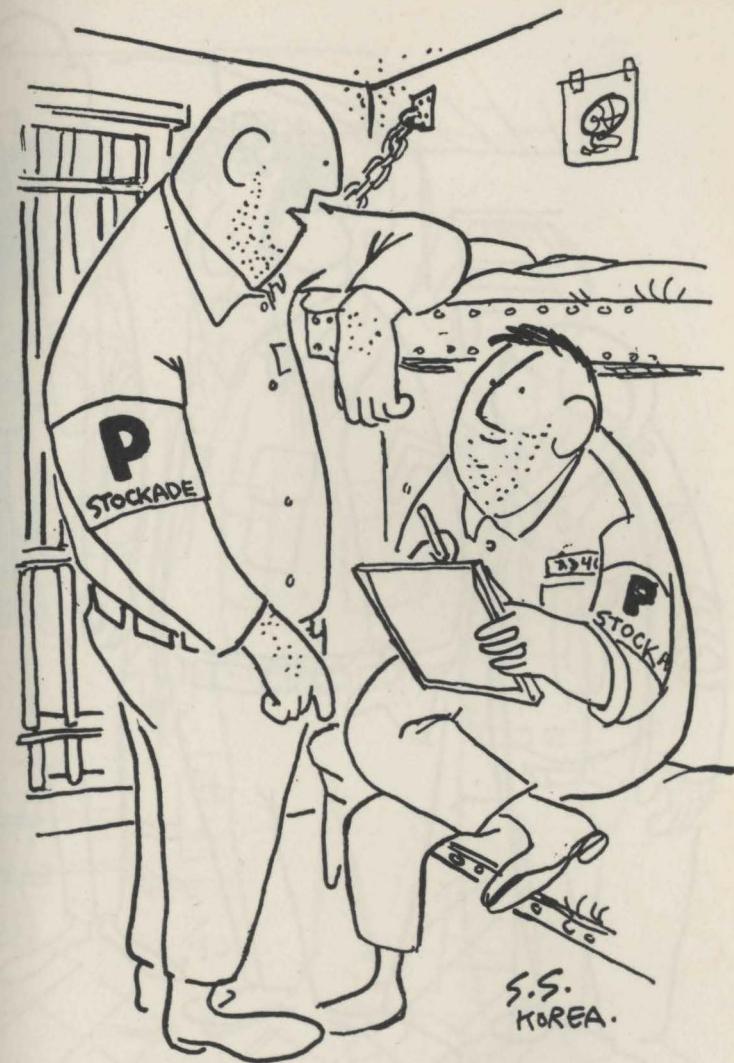
Your Service Club



*"O.K., who's been sneaking
meat into the hamburger...!"*



"Why isn't Donovan on the duty roster?"



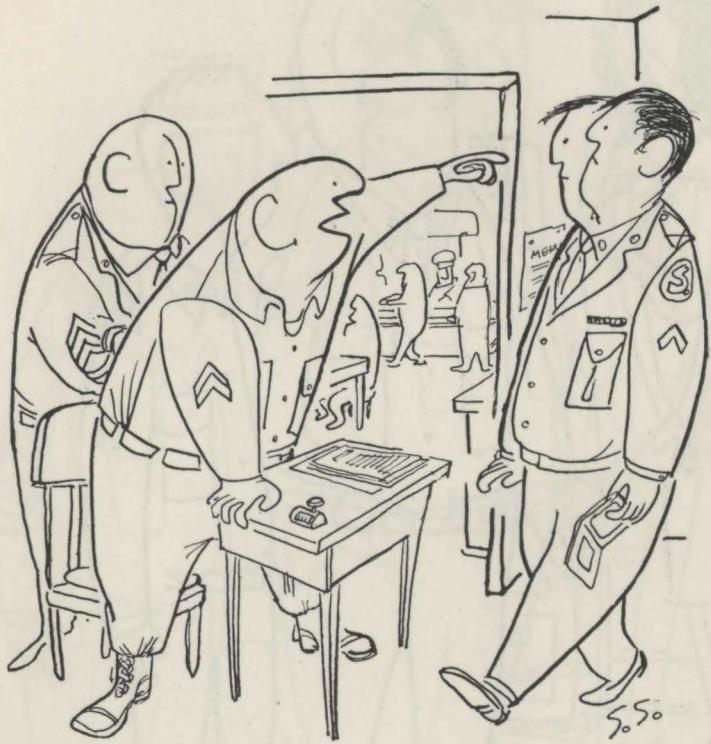
"I don't think it's quite accurate to write
your folks that you're a prisoner of war."



"And this is our staff...Shorty...Curley..."



"Skinny...and...er...um...Miss Johnson!"



"There's the guy, Sarge...He's been
fouling up the head count all week!"





"I want to see that safety pin SHINE!"



"Well, well...I see where Jack Dempsey knocked out Firpo in the second round..."

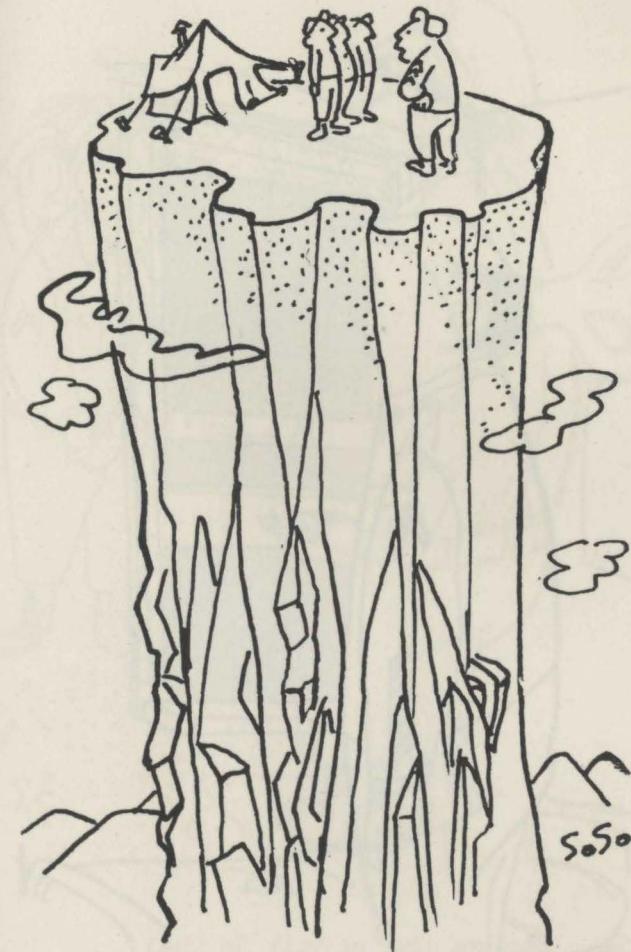
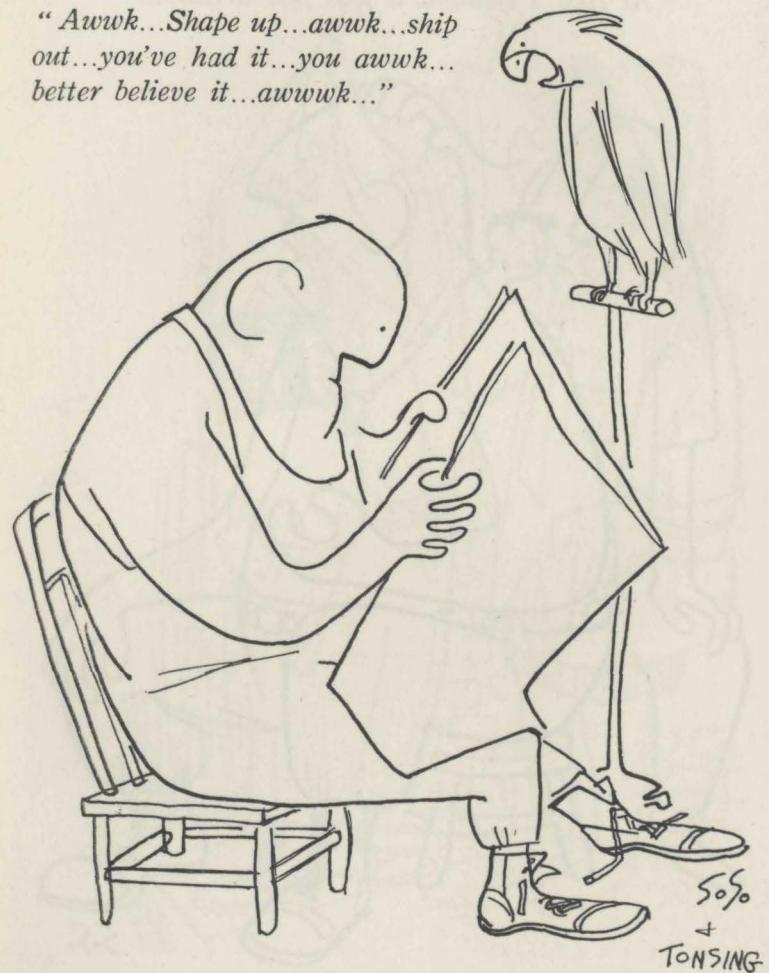


"I have seen men out of uniform before, but..."

"At first I thought it was just a wart..."



*"Awwk...Shape up...awwk...ship
out...you've had it...you awwk...
better believe it...awwwk..."*



"Any more horsing around and I'll pull ALL your passes!"

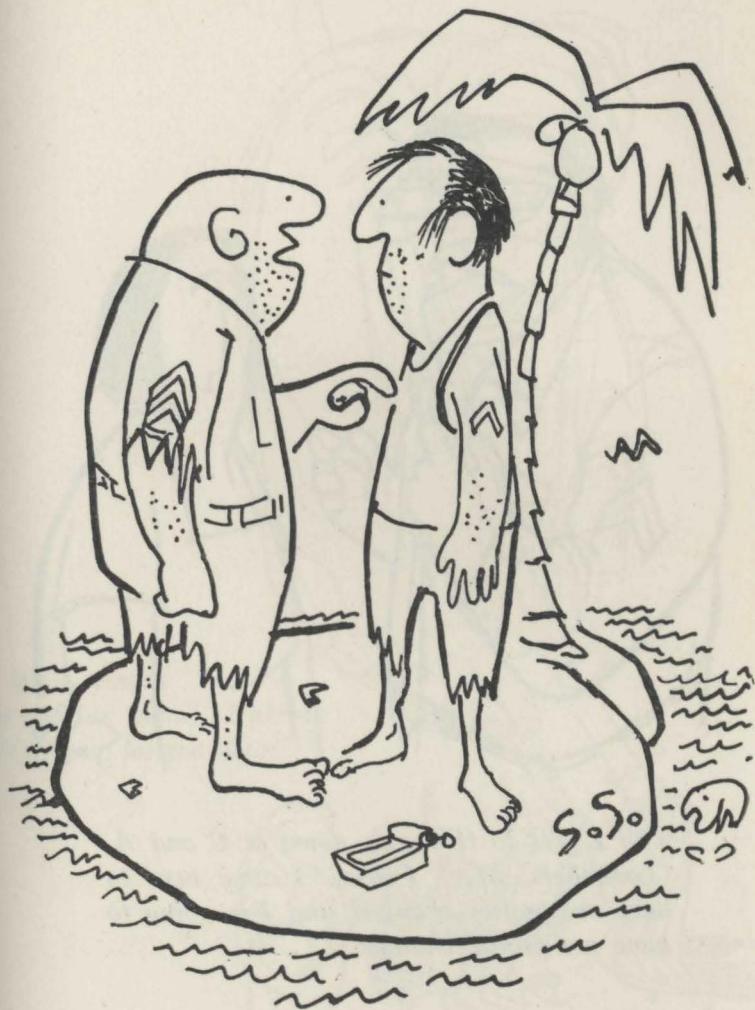
"Star Light...Star Bright..."



*"Once ol' Dawson gets wound
up, he can talk all afternoon!"*



"Just think, Emily... Then we'd have 12 stripes between us!"



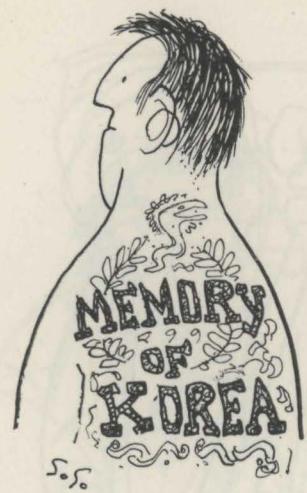
"Shape up, or ship out!"



"So I says to this guy down at C and A.
'Look here, Mac,' I says, 'I came here to
have my profile changed and I'm going to
have my profile changed'!"

*"When you're
on latrine detail, Hakim,
YOU pull latrine detail!"*

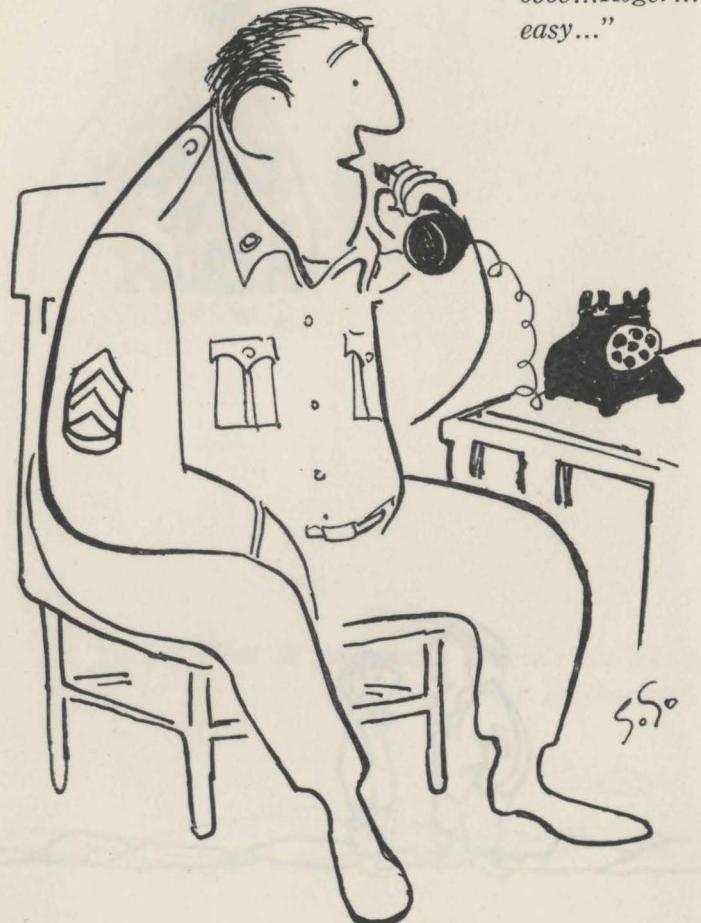




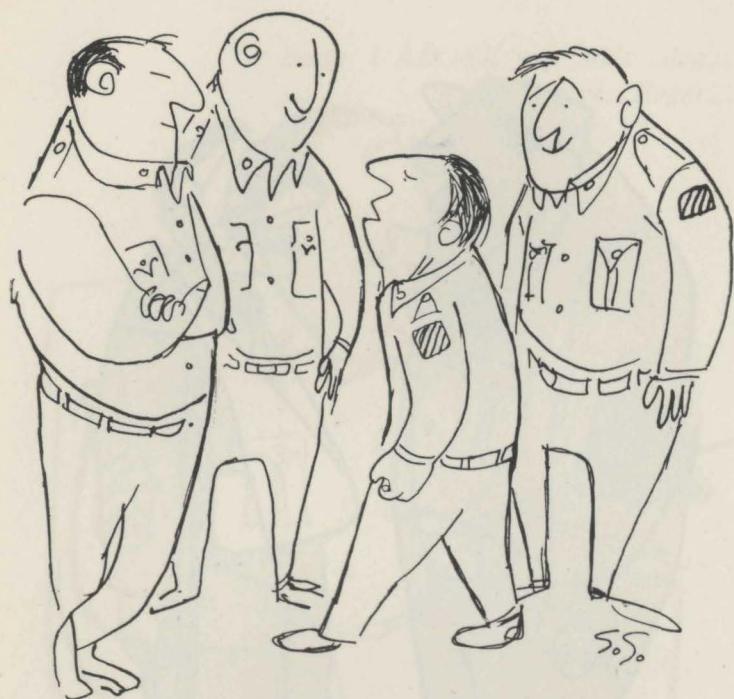
*"What do you mean, Where's the latrine?...
This IS the latrine!"*



*"Betty, I ADORE you...able...dog...
obo...Roger...
easy..."*



"Tighten up that sling!"



*"So what?..General Grant was RA...
George Washington was RA...
Stonewall Jackson was RA..."*



*"And then we all went home and
put on our father's old uniforms."*



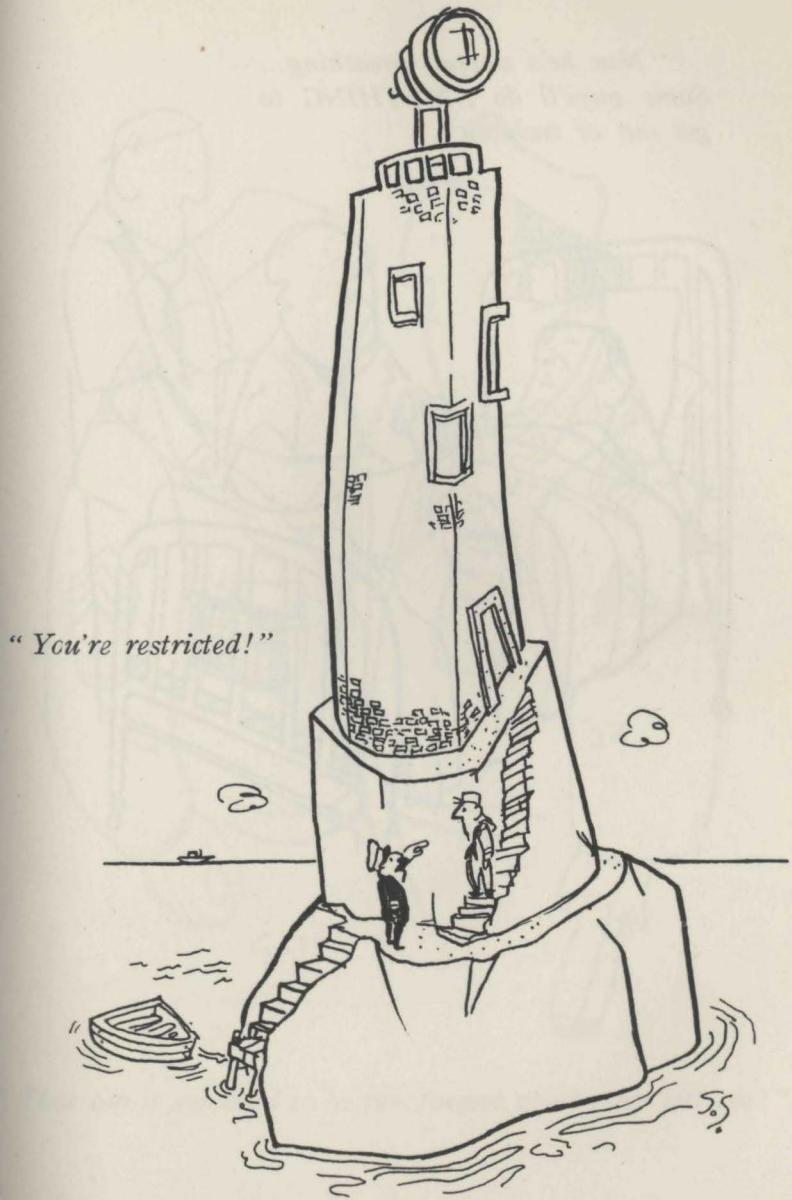
*"The trouble with you, Nolan, is that
you expect extra special treatment!"*



*"The poster said, 'JOIN NOW...CLIMB THE LADDER!'
...and I, thinking it was the fire department..."*

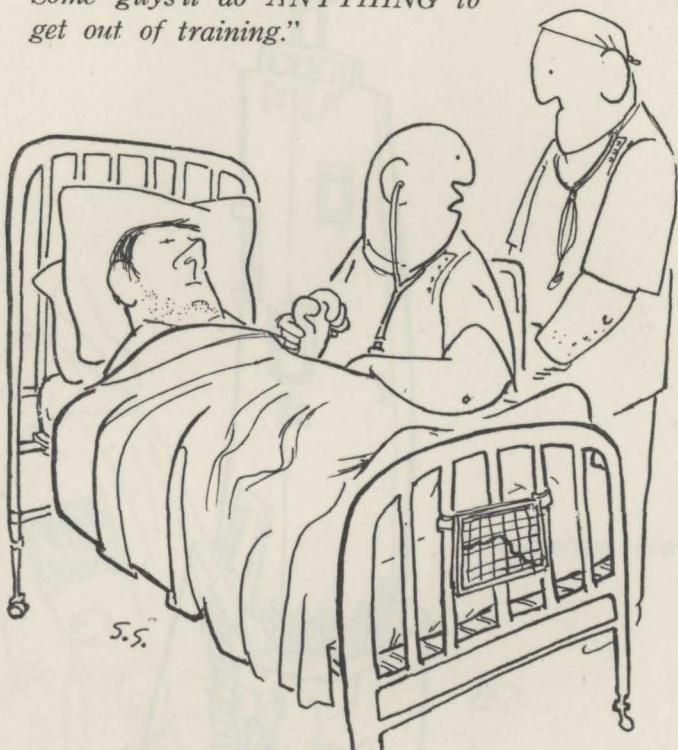


"Let's try singing 'For He's A Jolly Good Fellow'."

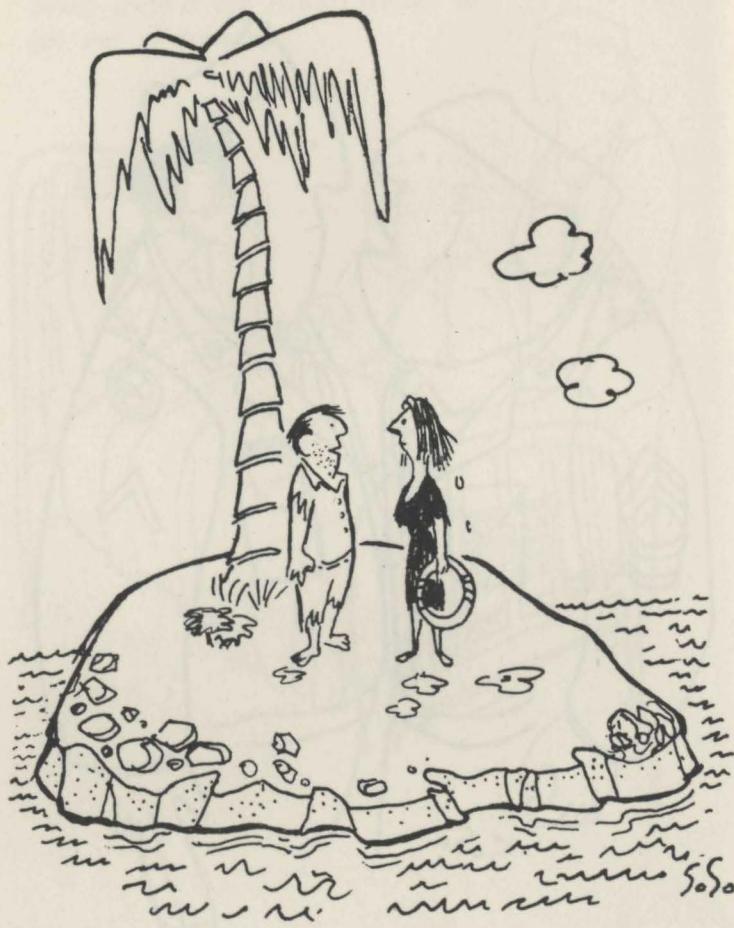


"You're restricted!"

*"Now he's stopped breathing...
Some guys'll do ANYTHING to
get out of training."*



"That cap is supposed to be two fingers above your left eye!"



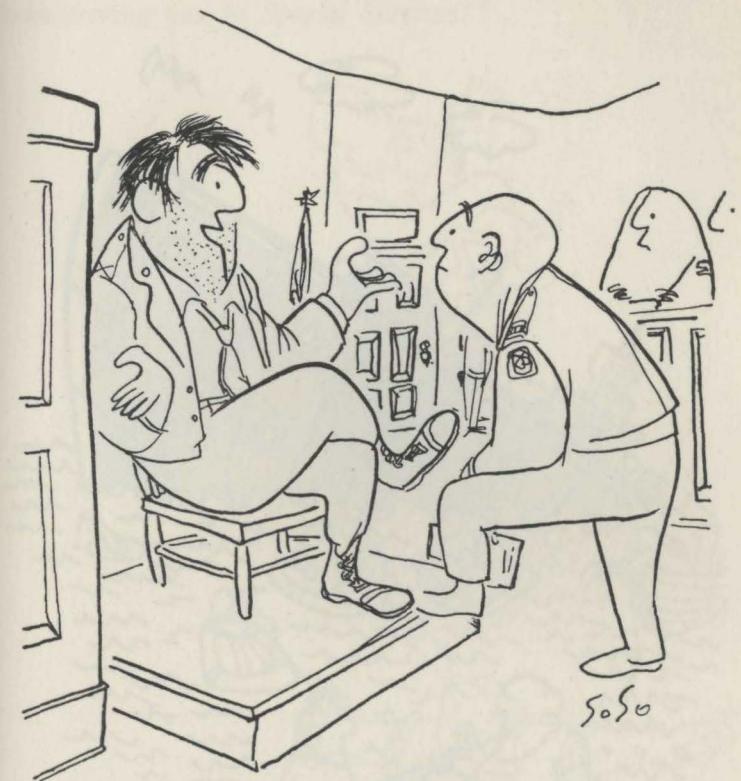
*"Well, the first thing to do is find a bright
piece of cloth for a distress flag..."*



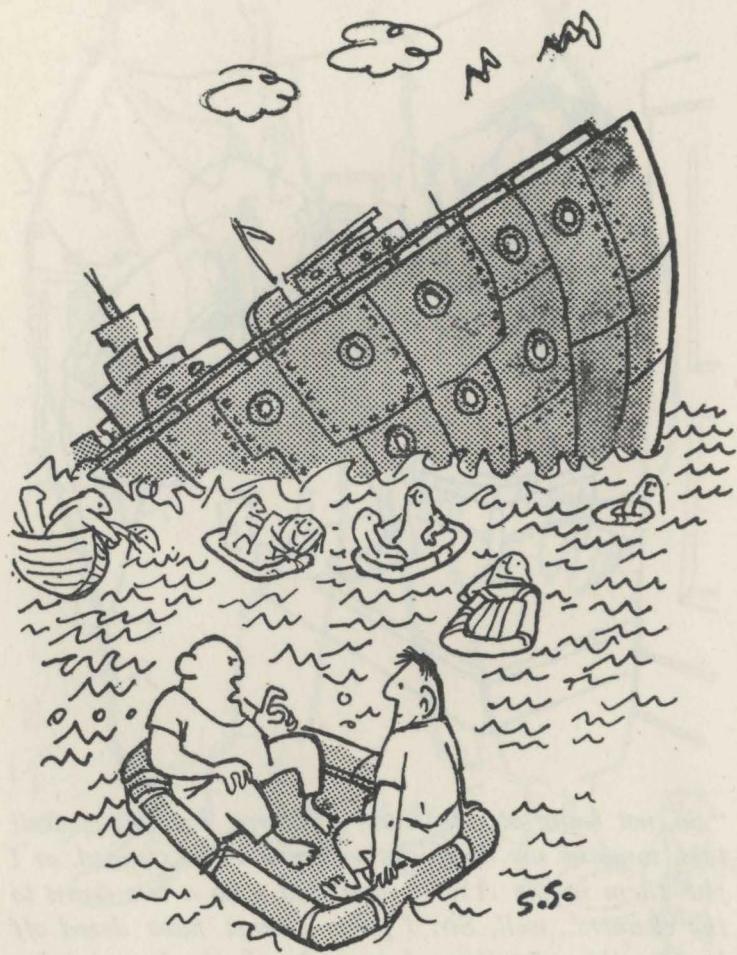
"Here comes the Old Man..."



"Holloway got busted all the way down!"



"So, not being able to sleep, I figured I might as well take some of my dirty clothes down to be cleaned, so I put them in my AWOL bag and grab a bus down to the cleaners...well, Sir, I guess I must have dozed off because the next thing I remember is the bus stopping and there I was back home in Chicago...‘Gee-whiz!’ I yelled, ‘I’m on the wrong bus’!"



"Strauss...you'll sign a statement of charges for this!"

"For the last time, Dickson, I am NOT transferring you to Special Services!"





*"Salsburry...you're not COST conscious...
you're not SECURITY conscious...you're
not C.B.R. conscious...you're not..."*



*"Oh, this Tokyo duty beats Korea, all right,
but I sure do miss those R and Rs..."*



"What do you guys do for excitement around here?"

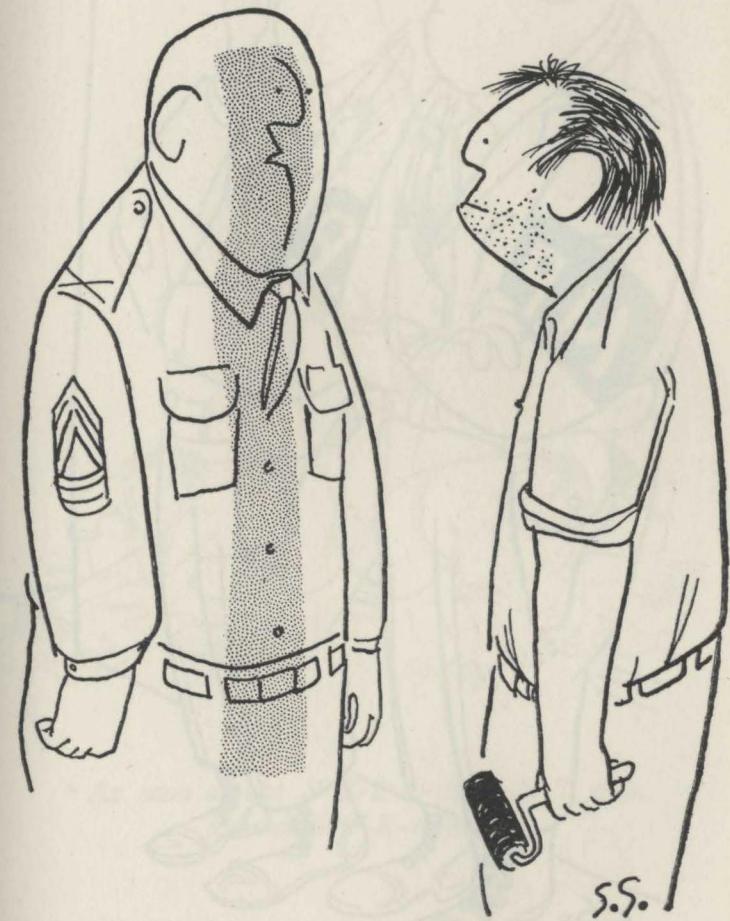


"Sure I'm glad I got promoted...I just hate losing all that time in grade!"



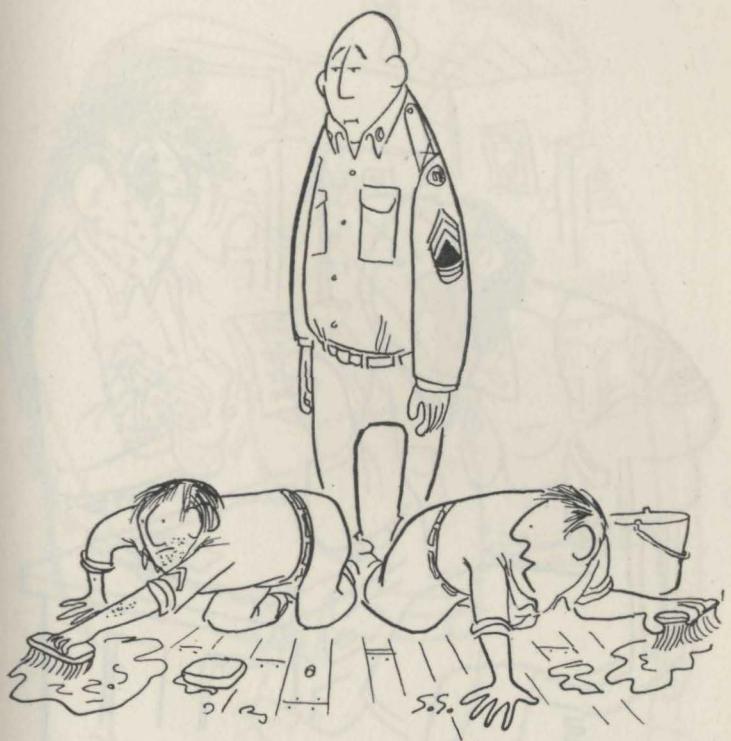
"Ah, Lieutenant Wilcox, I'm glad you're still here... It seems there's been a mistake in orders...seems it's Lieutenant WILSON who's going to Korea and not you and...Wilcox?...Lt. Wilcox?..."

"And that's another thing, Schwartz...we're not too satisfied with your attitude, either!"

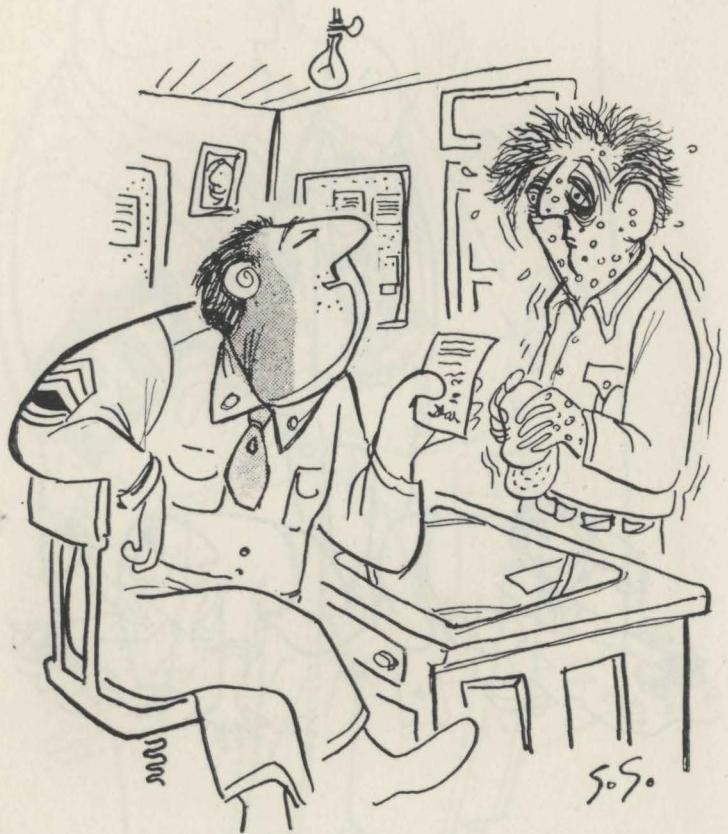




"Pssst...Merry Christmas..."



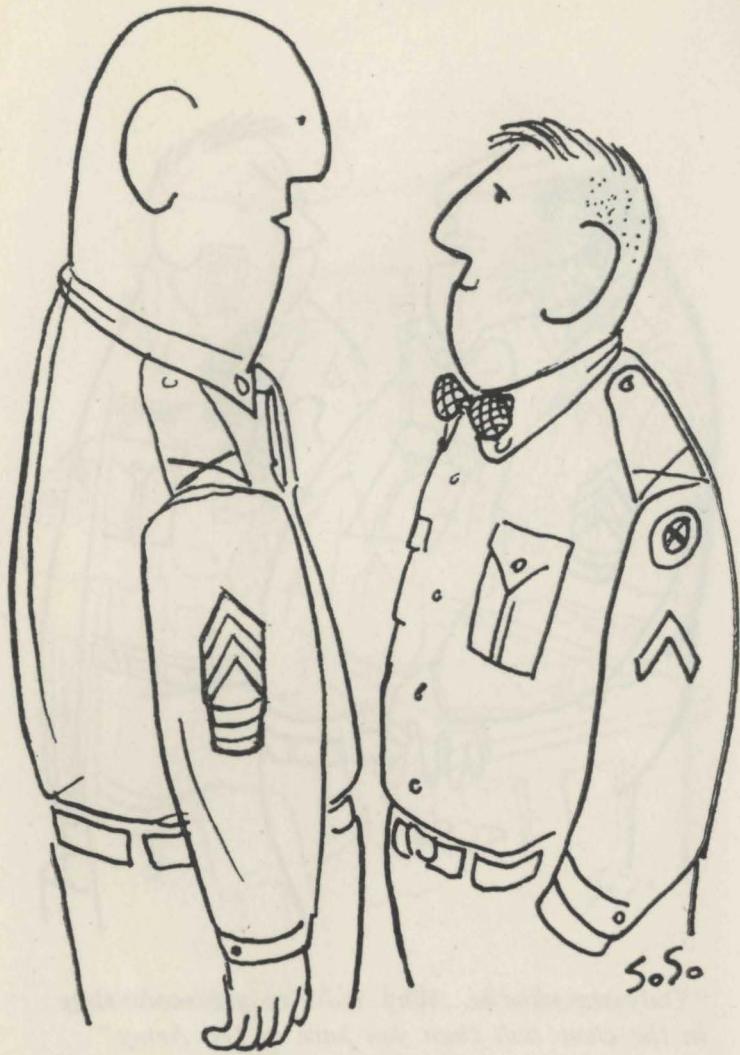
*"As soon as the S-E-R-G-E-A-N-T goes,
we can S-C-R-A-M!"*



"Still riding the ol' sick list, eh, Carpenter..."



*"Only six months...Why kid I've got more time
in the chow hall than you have in the Army."*



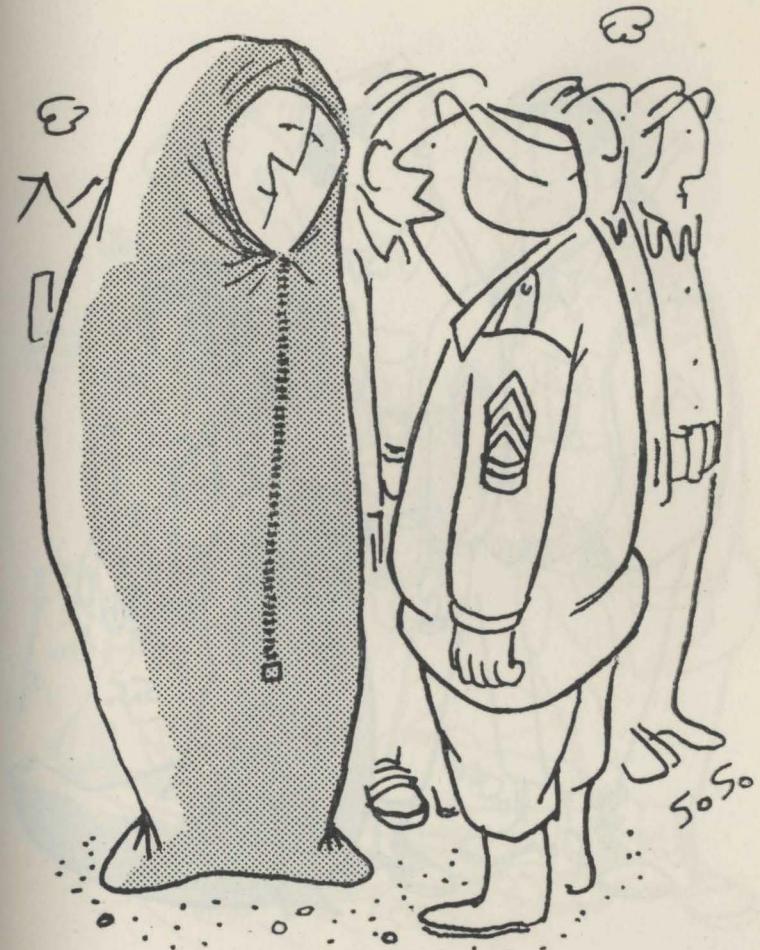
"And what's more...I don't like it..."

*"You know the rules
about no pets in the bar-
racks, Garrity"*





*"First of all I want to appologize for gigging you
on a filthy rifle...And I'm sorry I told you you'd
never make it...and as for your haircut..."*



*"I don't like getting out of the sack
on these cold mornings, either, Hicks!"*



"Well, here's that USO show you were raving about..."



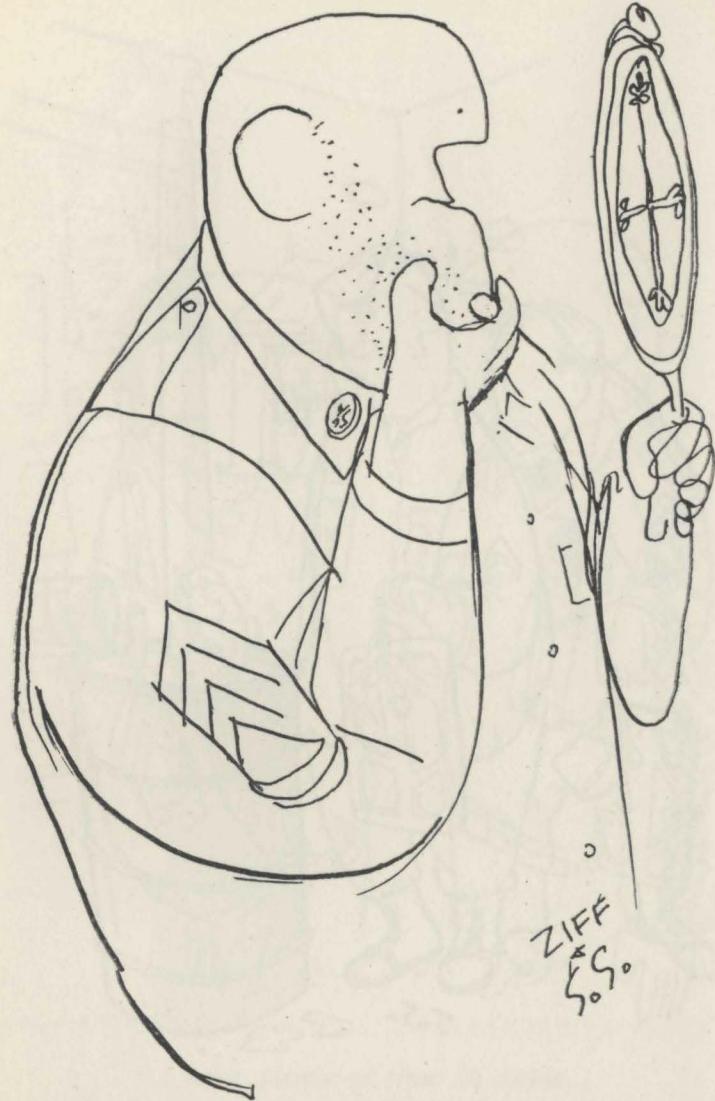
"To be perfectly frank, Sir, there isn't ROOM for an M-1."



*"I have plenty of time in grade...
I just don't have ROOM!"*



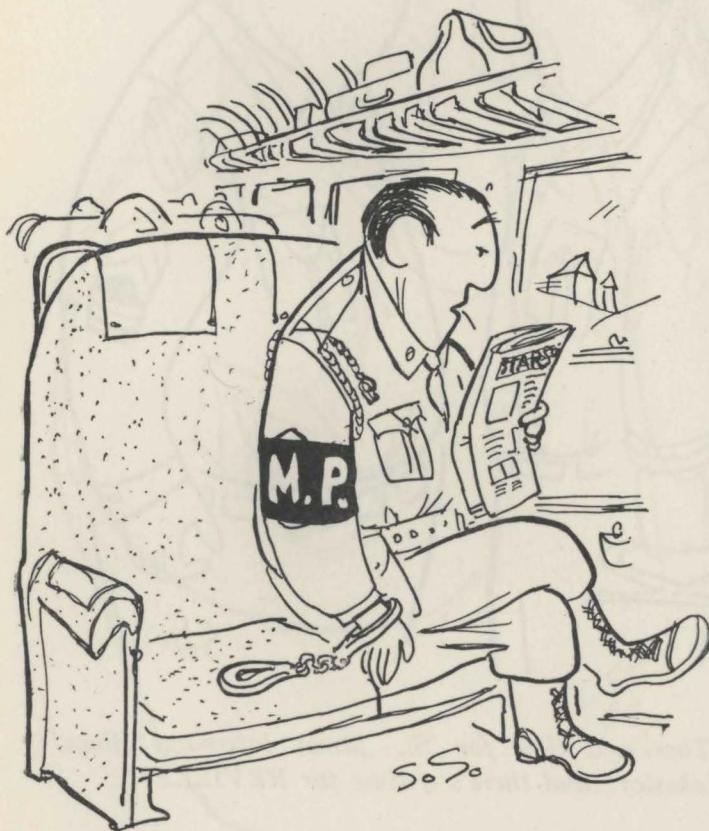
"O'l Everett will do ANYTHING for a laugh!"



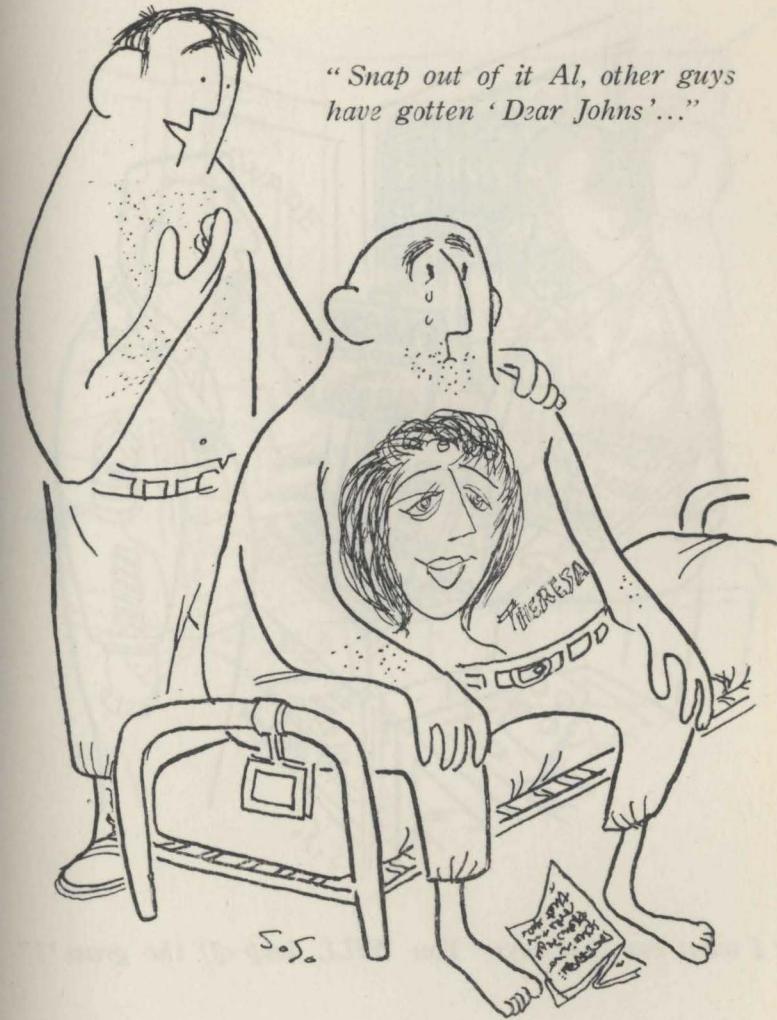
"Hmmm...a little 1700 shadow..."



"There's a time for 'St. James Infirmary Blues,'
Blakesley...and there's a time for REVILLE!"



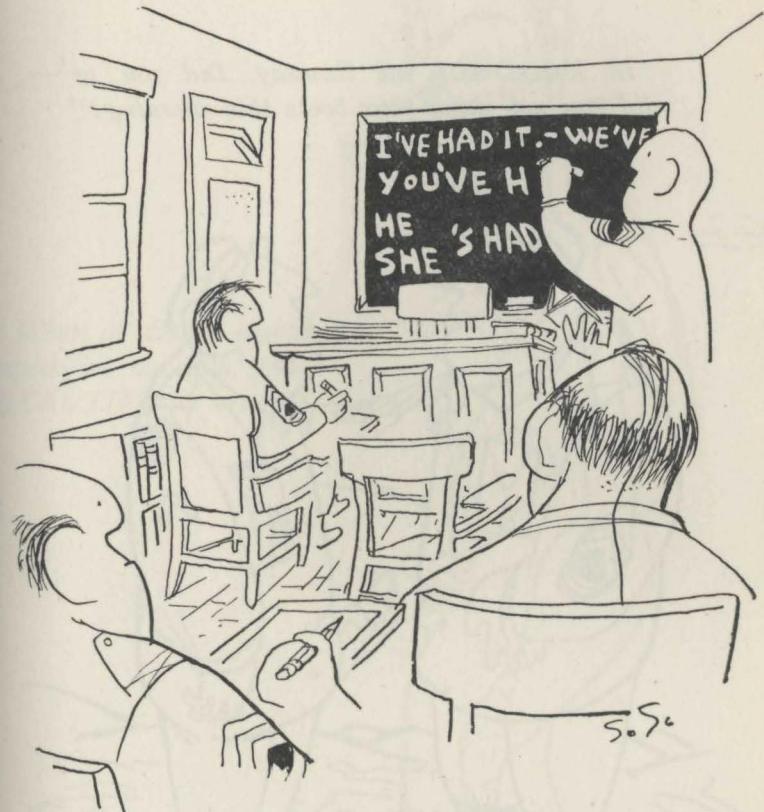
"And don't try any funny stuff, Slim..."



"Snap out of it Al, other guys
have gotten 'Dear Johns'..."



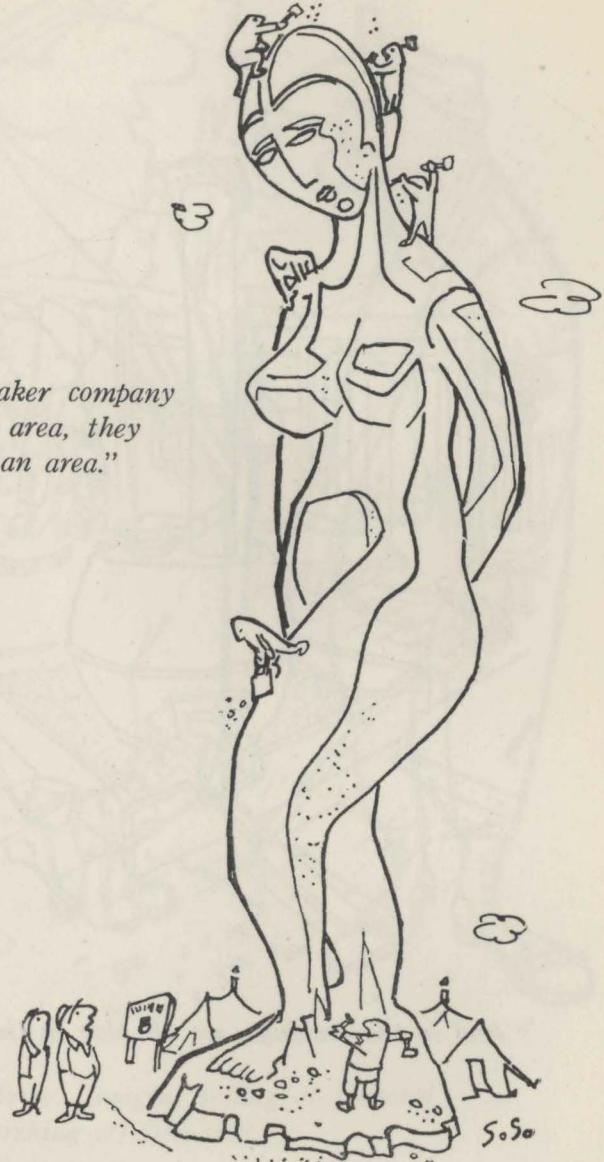
"I want one that says 'You **WILL** keep off the grass'!"

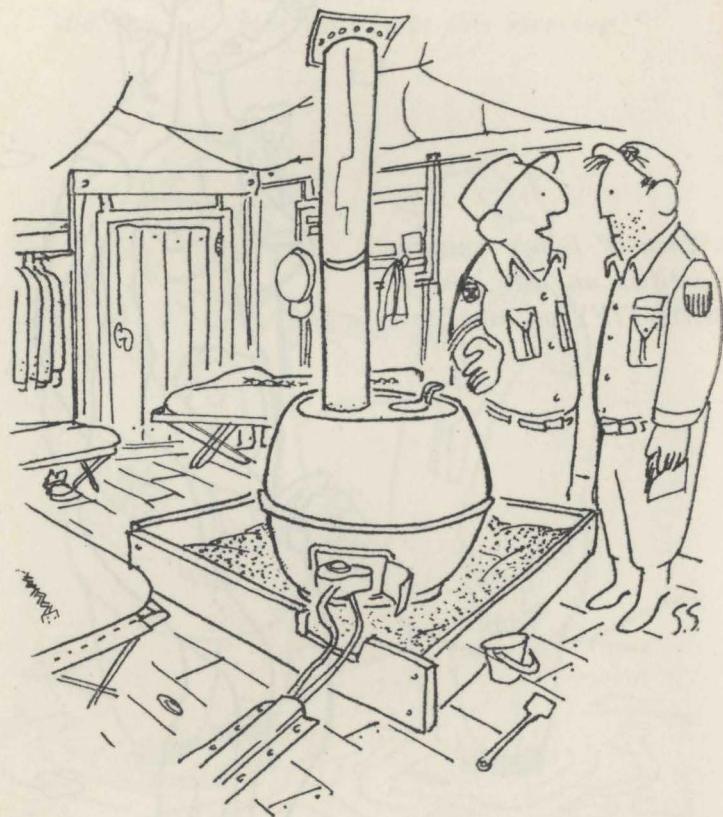


*"Be honest with me Ramsay...Did you, or
did you not shine your boots this morning?"*



*"When ol' Baker company
beautifies an area, they
BEAUTIFY an area."*





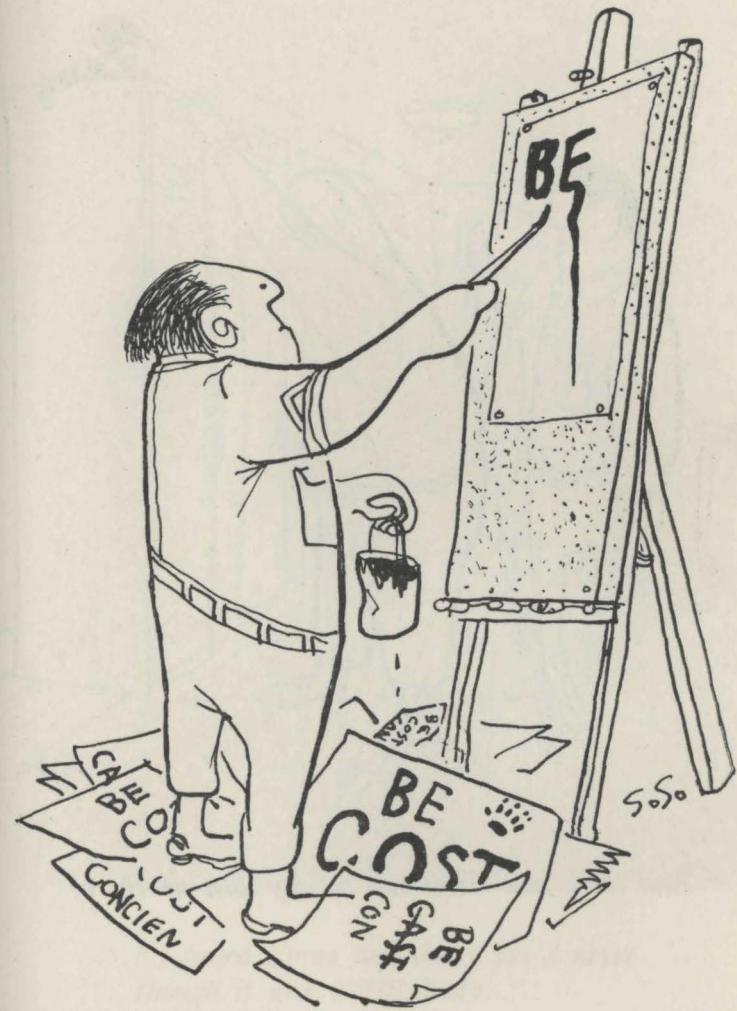
"And in the evenings, we all play in the sandbox."



"Wow...Imagine telling ol' General Pershing off like that!"

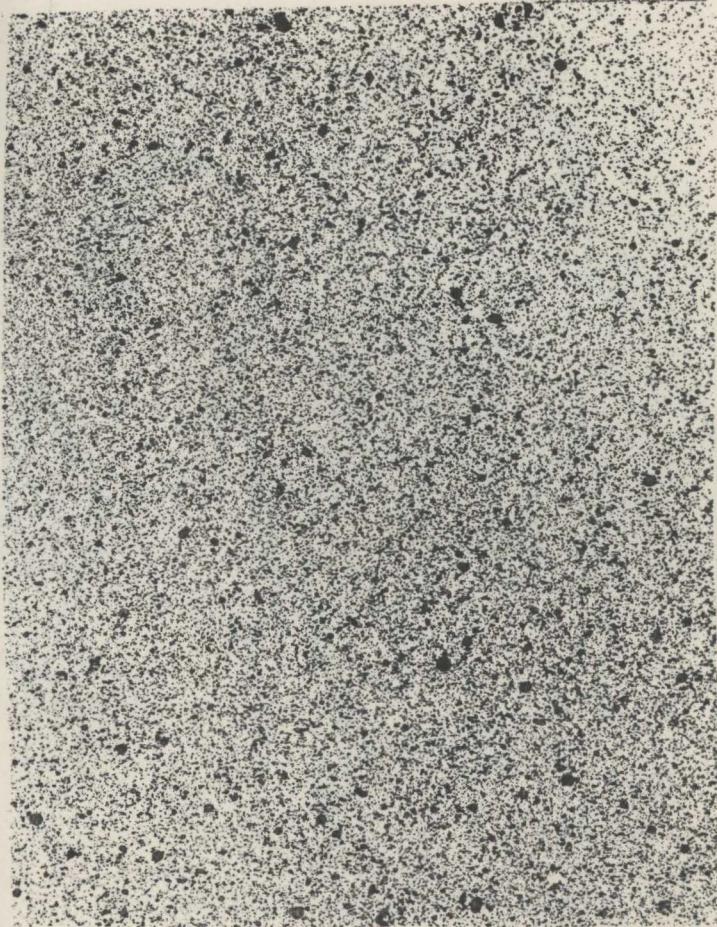


"Frankly, Pvt. Jorgenson...you don't show me much!"





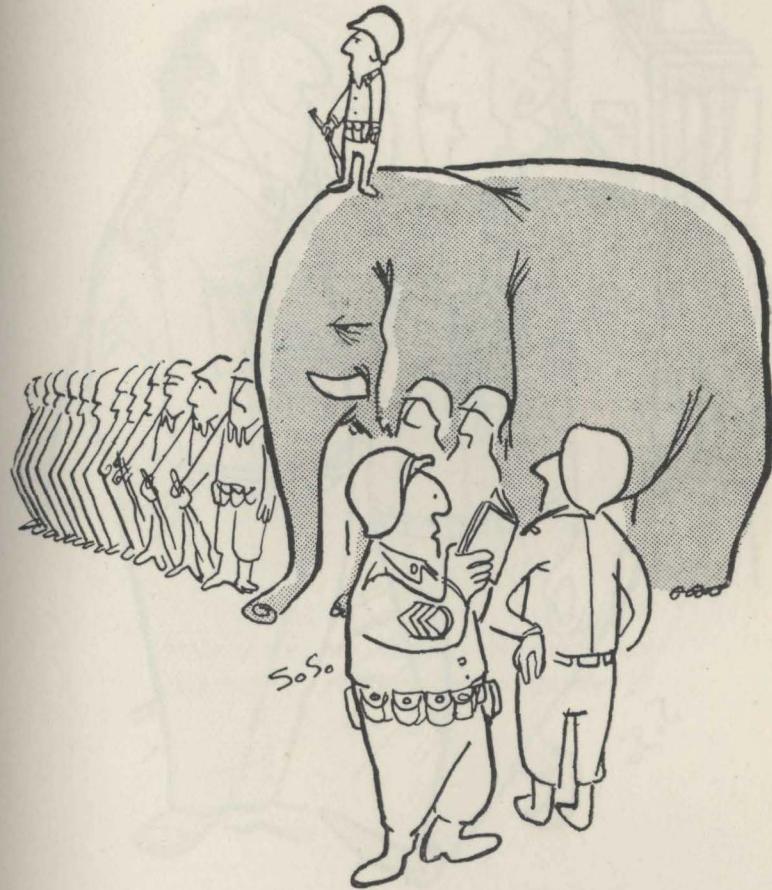
"And there just better not be any dust up there!"



*"I heard Korea was dusty but I never
thought it was THIS dusty..."*



*"That's strange...when I told that joke
to the troops, everybody laughed."*



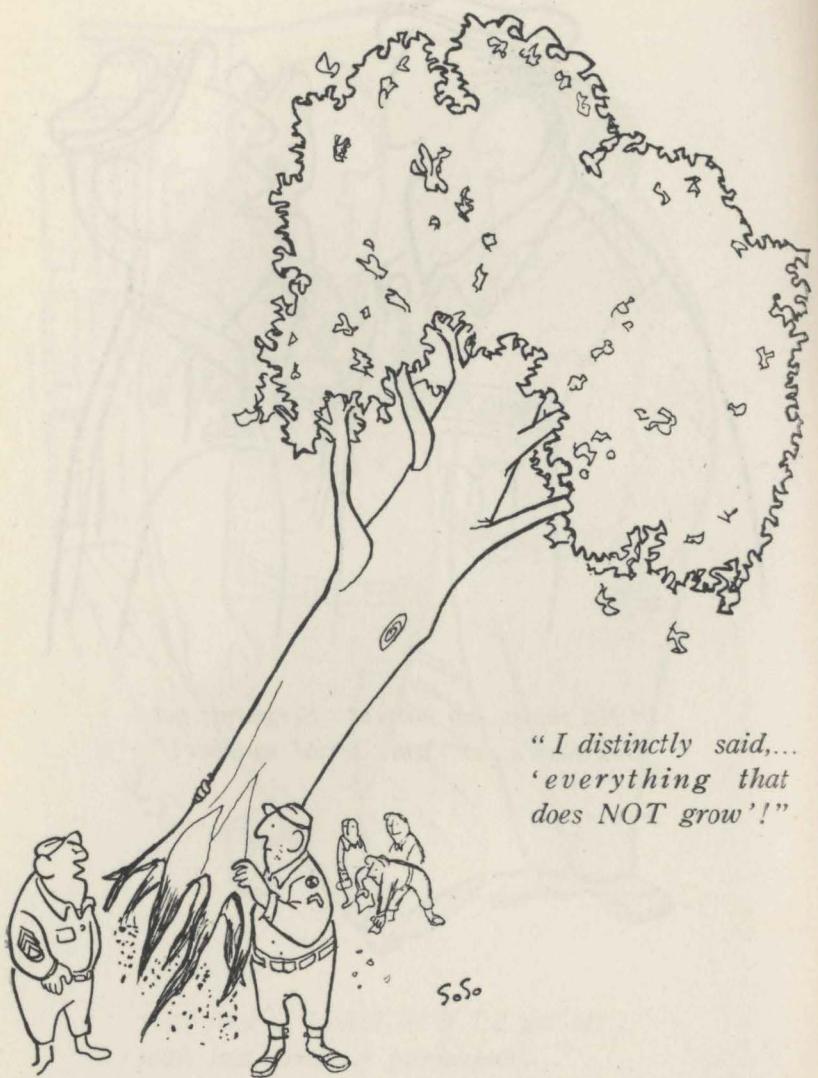
"I'm checking the regulation book now, Sir."



*"At first it looked as if I'd get off
with just company punishment..."*



*"No shave...no haircut...Sergeant, get
this man's...er...um...serial number!"*



*"I distinctly said,...
'everything that
does NOT grow'!"*



*"Joan...dearest...Won't you change
your serial number to mine."*



"And hereafter, Weems, refer to this as the Third Poultry Storage Unit...and not 'that chicken outfit'!"



"But Sarge... You said you didn't want to see anything but shoe soles and elbows and..."



*"When I get into my civies I
forget all about the Army!"*



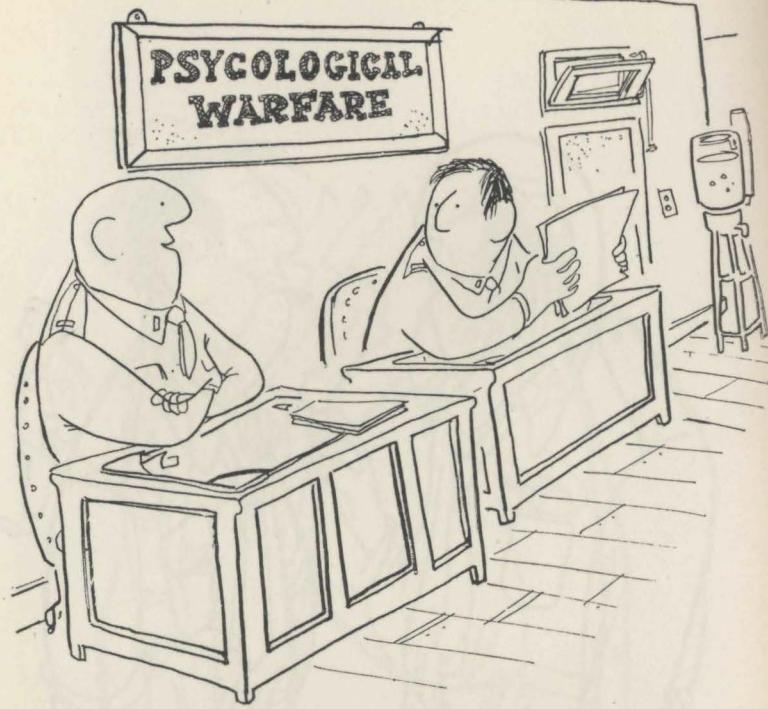
"...so this MP comes up to my SFC and asks to see his ID...seems that some VIP at G-2 called the CICCQ and since the NCOIC was away on TDY the CQ checked with the OD and according to a new SR, all NCOs get TPA only if..."



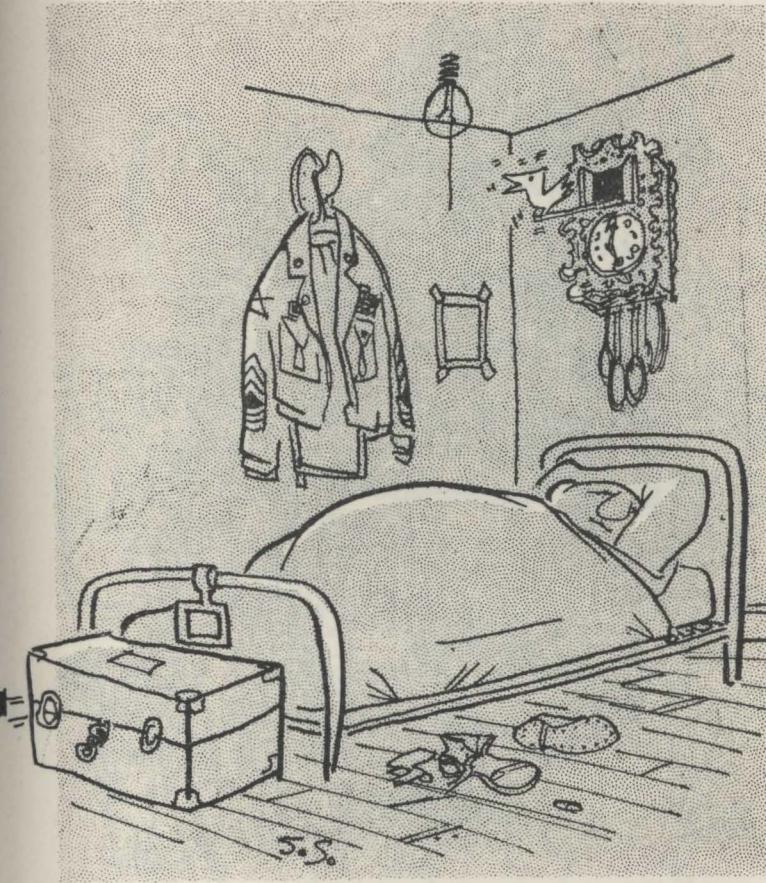
"Shape up!"



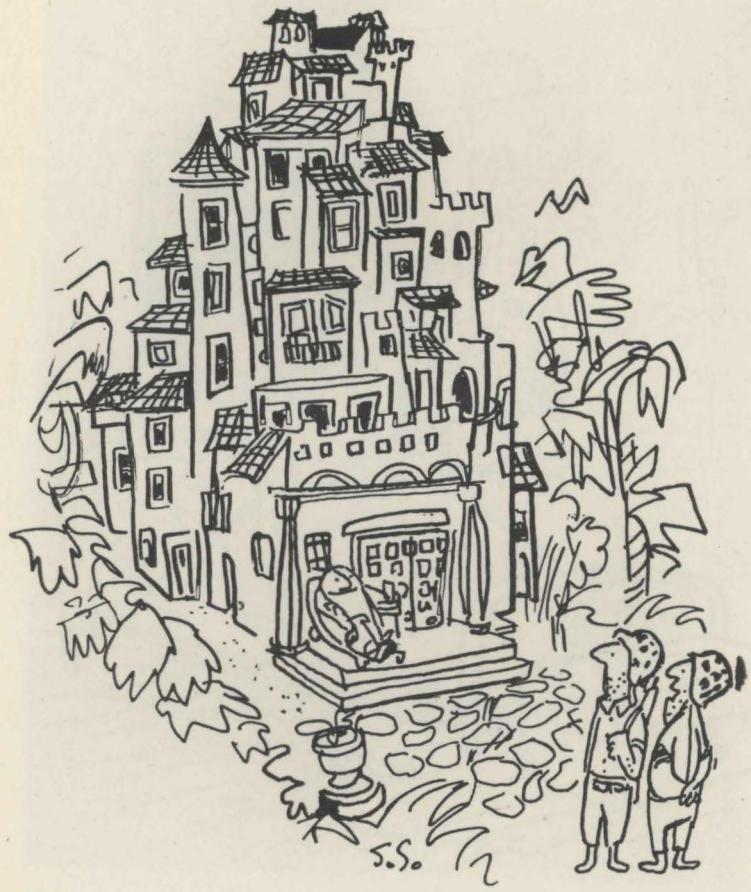
*"I don't care what the sergeant said, Bob
... You're my idea of a sharp soldier!"*



"I don't think you COULD get me a drink of water...even if you wanted to."



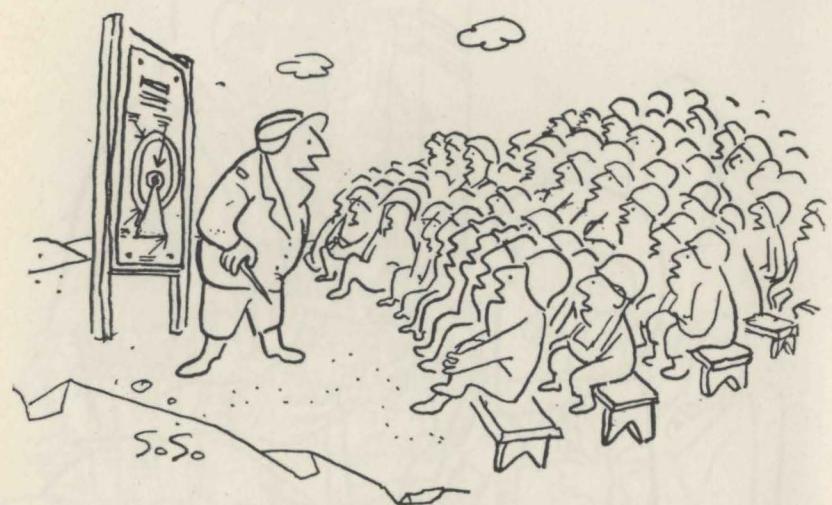
"Coo-coo, coo-coo,...rise and shine...coo-coo, let's hit it, coo-coo, grab your socks, coo-coo, coo-coo..."



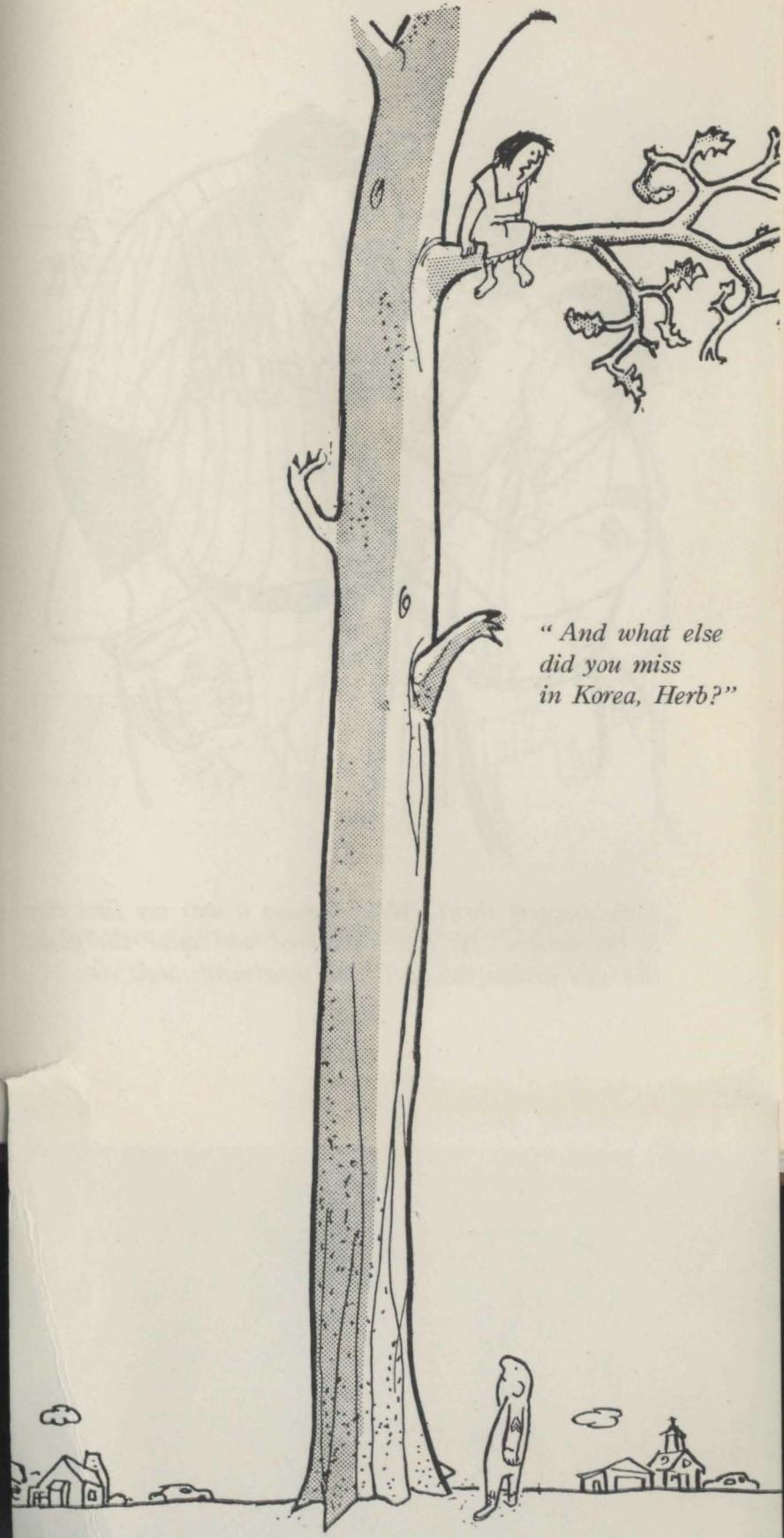
"Ol' MacCardle's found a home in the Army."



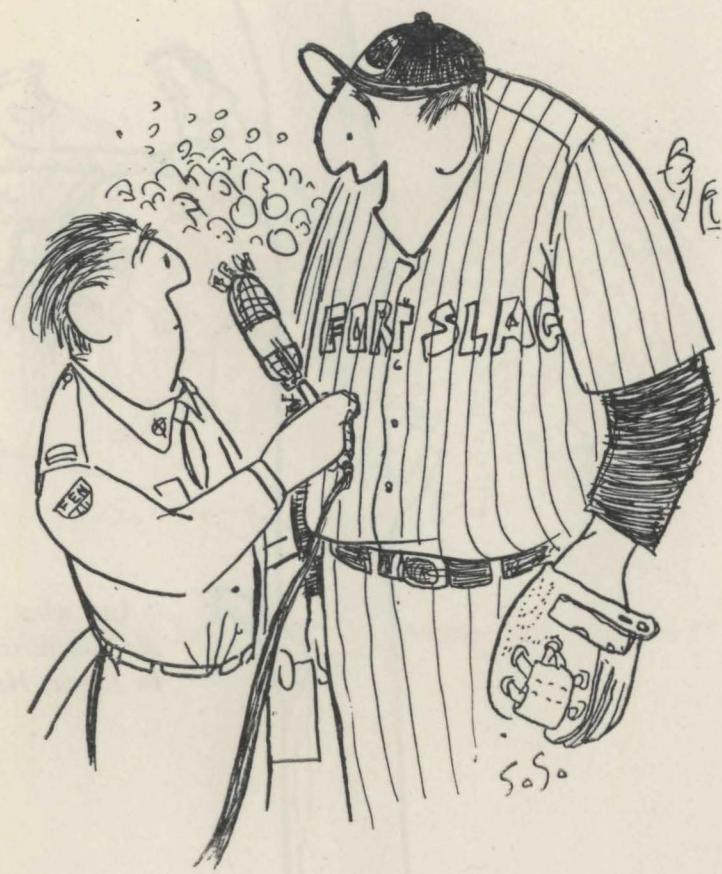
*"Simply answer, 'I do', Sergeant...
Not, 'You better believe it'!"*



"Happy New Year, men" "Happy New Year, sir!"



"And what else
did you miss
in Korea, Herb?"



"My greatest thrill... Well, I guess it was my first day in the majors... We beat Cleveland and after the game this girl invites me up to her apartment... well sir..."



".. You were a lousy soldier and you're a lousy CIVILIAN!"





"Oh let's not call it a BUST, Larson...Let's say instead that you have reverted to your permanent rank."



"Sure, but who do you think'll police it up..."



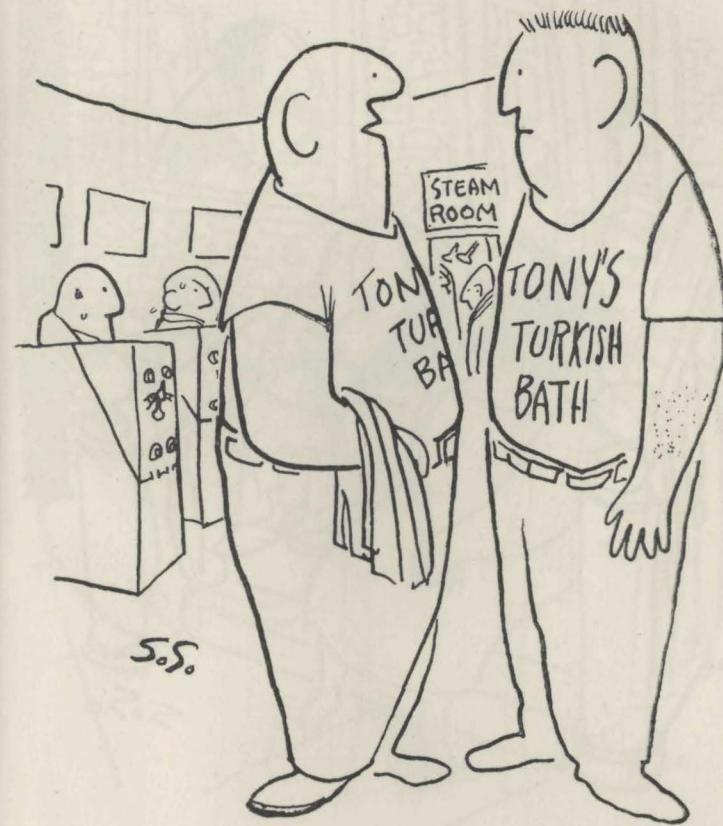
"Frank!...Frank Thackary!...You old son of a gun...I haven't seen you since Anzio...How are you?...Where've you been?...Straighten that tie!...How's the family?..."



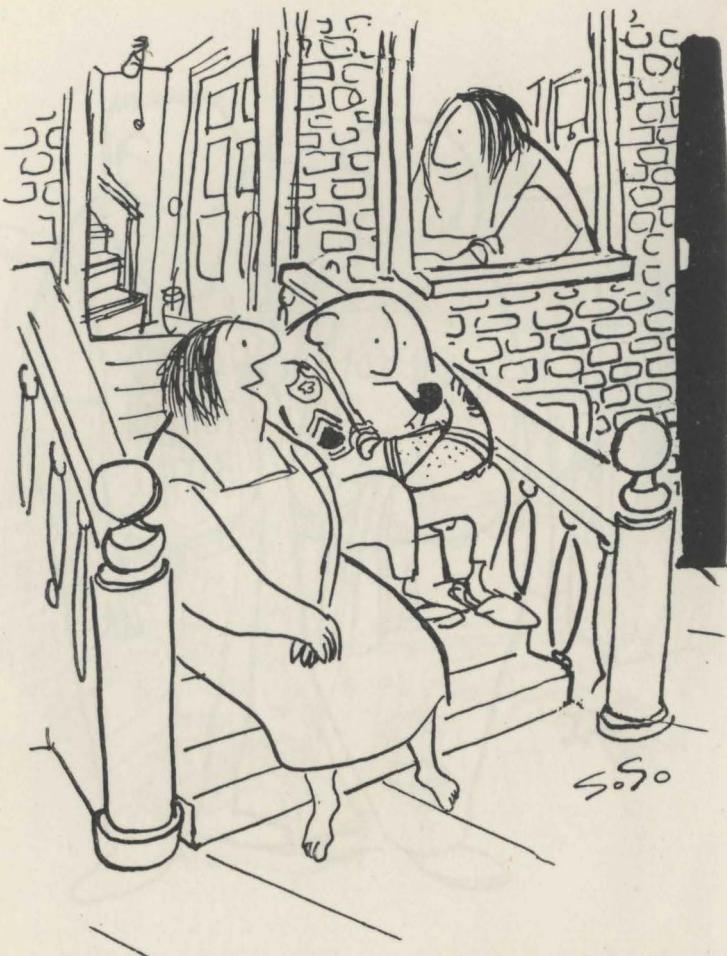
"Moshi-moshi...I mean HELLO Marge. This is Birr-san—I mean BILL...yeah, I just landed in Seattle a sukoshi - a LITTLE WHILE ago...Sure I'm dai job—er, FINE...Nani?"



"It's just like you left it, Phil...we haven't changed a thing."



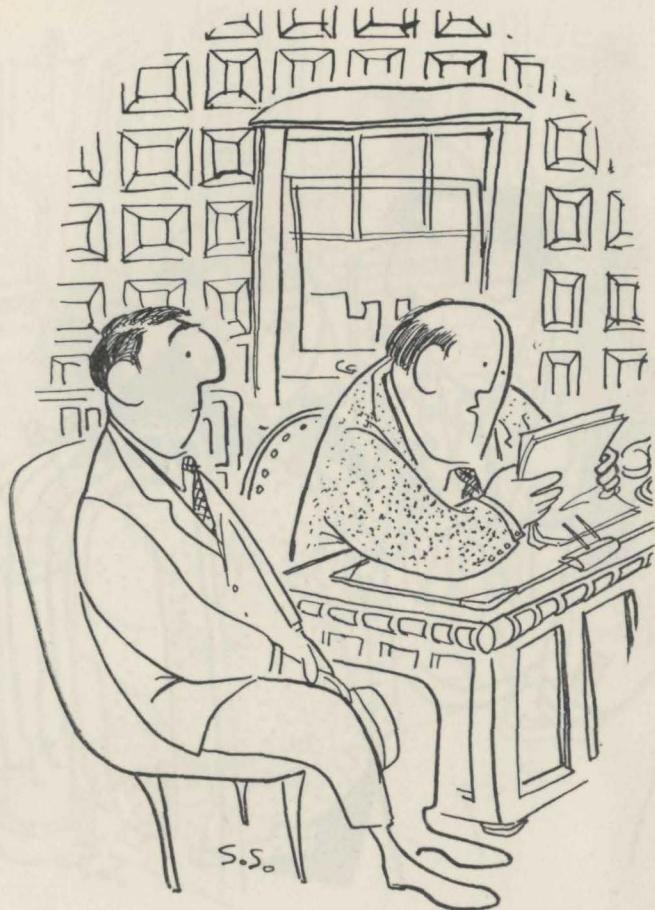
"That 'NO SWEAT' expression may have gone in
the Army, Simms, but it doesn't go HERE!"



*"Ed is so affectionate since he got back...
Calls me his little honey bucket..."*



"Don't you have ANY with dragons on the back?"



"Let's see now...finished school in '51...spent four months in Texas...two weeks in Seattle...a week in Japan...14 months in Korea...Can't seem to settle down, can you?"

About the artist:

Sheldon A. Silverstein was born in 1930, on Chicago's northwest side. He studied art for one year at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts and English for four years at the University of Illinois and Roosevelt College. His work as an artist began while he was a hot dog vendor in the Chicago ball parks.

The army drafted him in September, 1953 and he served at Ft. Riley Kansas and Ft. Belvoir Va, before coming to the Far East and Stars and Stripes.

He is a P.F.C.

This is his first book.

